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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 002049

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/CT, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP, DS/ATA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CT](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: RAJAH SOLAIMAN MOVEMENT TERRORIST DEPORTED TO
PHILIPPINES

Classified By: Amb. Kristie A. Kenney, reasons 1.4 b, d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Ruben Omar Pestano Lavilla, Jr., a key leader of the Philippine terrorist group Rajah Solaiman Movement, was deported to Manila on August 30, after he was arrested on July 24 in Bahrain. The deportation was an important success for Philippine officials, who worked through the United Nations 1267 process to have Lavilla returned to the Philippines. Lavilla, who masterminded the 2004 Superferry and 2005 Valentine's Day bombings in Metro Manila that killed at least 120 people, is included on the United Nations and U.S. terrorist lists. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On August 30, Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) top leader Ruben Omar Pestano Lavilla, Jr. was deported to the Philippines after being arrested in Bahrain July 24. According to Philippine Justice Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor, Lavilla was arrested after he applied for a job at the Philippine Embassy in Bahrain and officials there discovered he had outstanding warrants in the Philippines for murder and rebellion, but how long Lavilla had been in Bahrain and his previous occupation there are unconfirmed. The arrest came shortly after Lavilla was designated a terrorist under the United Nations 1267 Resolution.

¶3. (C) Lavilla is wanted for his alleged role in organizing the bombing of Superferry 14 in Manila Bay on February 27, 2004, when a ship carrying 900 people exploded 90 minutes after departing Manila. Another RSM member confessed to planting the explosives and implicated Lavilla as the mastermind, saying that RSM had carried out the bombing on behalf of the Abu Sayyaf Group, which had failed to extort PHP 1 million in protection money from the shipping company. Lavilla fled the Philippines after the Superferry bombing, but continued his involvement in RSM activities. He is suspected of having planned from abroad the 2005 Valentine's Day bus bombing in Metro Manila, which killed four people and injured 36 others.

¶4. (C) Lavilla is believed to be a key figure in RSM, a group of radical Islam converts formed in 2002 that operates in Manila and northern Luzon. In the past, the group has collaborated with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in waging urban terrorism in major Philippine cities. In June 2005, Washington imposed financial sanctions against the RSM, which reportedly receives funding from Jemaah Islamiyah, the ASG, and private sources in Saudi Arabia. In 2006, the Embassy Manila awarded \$500,000 in USG reward money to two informants who assisted in the capture of RSM founder Hilarion Ahmed Santos.

¶5. (C) The Philippine government has worked diligently the last three years to have the RSM listed as a terrorist organization by the United Nations. Following the United Nations Security Council listing of the RSM and eight of its leaders on the 1267 Committee's terrorist list of "individuals and entities affiliated with Al-Qaeda, the

Taliban, and Osama bin Laden," on June 4, 2008, the State Department listed RSM as "specially designated global terrorists."

16. (C) Philippine officials told Embassy personnel that they were proud of their ability to make the 1267 process work and that they were able to have Lavilla deported so quickly to the Philippines. The Philippine officials also remarked that they are considering watchlisting some individual Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commanders as terrorists, but that there is an internal debate within the Philippine government as to the effectiveness of taking that step. Existing legislation such as the Philippine Human Security Act is seen by some officials as actually providing terrorists with protections due to various provisions for compensation in the event of unjust incarceration. Consequently, the Philippine government is looking at the 1267 mechanism as a possible vehicle for individual MILF terrorist designations.

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